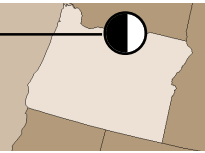


The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

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Building Optimism -- and a Trail



Once seen as an impossible dream, Morrow County built optimism -- and then a plan of action -- to develop a 28-mile heritage trail along the shores of the Columbia River in rural Oregon.

Impossible Dream?

Tamra Mabbott envisioned a trail along the Columbia River-- but like many in Morrow County thought it was an impossible dream. It would be too difficult to develop. It would not be welcomed by landowners. And it would cost too much. Nearly two-thirds of Morrow County's residents are low or moderate income, and amenities like trails that more affluent communities take for granted are not readily funded.

Mabbott, planning director for Morrow County in rural Oregon, had seen repeated attempts to develop a trail stall in the last fifteen years. Yet she and other determined trail supporters refused to give up, because people were drawn to the Columbia River, trail or no trail. Unmarked footpaths, or social trails, followed the river. The river had always held an extraordinary influence on the county's way of life. Its waters powered dams, fed crops, supported salmon, and guided Lewis and Clark during their expeditions.

Developing a Plan -- and Community Support

Convinced that support for the trail existed but not knowing how to foster that support and turn it into action, Mabbott, in 1998, turned to the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (Rivers & Trails) program of the National Park Service for help.

To help Morrow County create a trail concept plan, Rivers & Trails inventoried resources, resolved management issues,

identified possible routes and initiated an interpretive plan.

To gain public support, Rivers & Trails helped Morrow County form an advisory committee, which included not only landowners but also members of the Hispanic and Native American communities, who comprise almost half of the population in the northern part of the county. The committee distributed bilingual brochures and organized special events like the Stop Oregon Litter and Vandalism clean-up and the first Annual Heritage Day.

Building One Section at a Time

Funding was Mabbott's biggest concern, as it had waylaid past attempts to build a trail. Without a large funding source to draw from, Rivers & Trails helped the community raise money creatively -- through pie baking contests, corporate donations and in-kind contributions from volunteers. As a result, the county is developing the trail as money and opportunities arise, first signing the route, then paving it and adding amenities like interpretive signs. With a goal of being finished in time for the Lewis and Clark bicentennial commemoration which begins in 2003, the trail, which had once seemed impossible to build, is taking shape -- one section at a time.

For More Information

Contact Alex Stone or Bryan Bowden of the National Park Service's Rivers & Trails program at (206) 220-4108 or alex_stone@nps.gov or (206) 220-4118 or bryan_bowden@nps.gov.

heritage trail -- a trail developed to celebrate local heritage -- natural and cultural -- by preserving and promoting the community's history, while providing an opportunity for recreation, transportation, and connections with nearby communities.

Keys to Success

Perseverance of Tamra Mabbott, County Planner, and Carol Michael, committee member, who pushed the trail forward even when momentum was low.

Collaboration between the landowners and the committee to create a vision and possible route for the trail.

Celebration of the diverse cultural influences -- not just Lewis and Clark but the Hispanic community and the Confederated Tribe of the Umatilla Indians -- in adopting a vision of the trail.



cultural sensitivity

Morrow County
City of Boardman
City of Irrigon
Port of Morrow
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla
Indian Reservation
Boeing Agri-Industrial Company

Community Support for a Trail



“Not only did Rivers & Trails provide top-quality support in developing the planning process and the trail concept plan, they also were sensitive to the local politics and culture”

Tamra Mabbott, Planner
Morrow County

Citizen committee sponsors a river clean-up and First Annual Heritage Day to raise awareness and funds for the trail.

Renewed interest in building a trail along the Columbia, over a decade after first attempt falters.

1995

Morrow County asks Rivers & Trails for help in developing a trail concept and public involvement plan.

Morrow County forms citizen committee to guide development of trail concept plan.

1998

Rivers & Trails completes trail plan, which is approved by citizen committee.

1999

Trail established with signs along route, paving and amenities to follow as funds are raised.

2001

What the Future Holds for the Columbia River Heritage Trail

The goal is to have the trail built in time for the bicentennial commemoration of the Lewis and Clark expedition, which begins in 2003. Also, the trail serves as a model for other counties bordering the Columbia River that are considering similar trail projects and may lead to a state-wide trail along the Columbia River. For example, Morrow County's neighbor, Umatilla County, is developing a trail from Hat Rock State Park to Umatilla, fueled by the desire to have a trail for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial.

Help From the National Park Service

Creating trail concept plans. Developing strategies for gaining public support. Raising funds creatively. In these ways over the course of a year, the National Park Service contributed to the Morrow County's decade-long effort to develop the Columbia River Heritage Trail. This is just one example of how the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program works -- it provides short-term staff assistance to local groups to help them solve the problems they face when protecting their community's important resources. If you think the National Park Service could help your group, contact Michael Linde, Program Leader, Rivers & Trails, 909 First Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104 or (206) 220-4113 or visit www.ncrc.nps.gov/rtca.

